Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Croghan National School
Boyle, County Roscommon
Uimhir rolla: 18012G

Date of inspection: 24 March 2011
1. Introduction

Croghan NS is located in a new school building in the village of Croghan in north county Roscommon. The number of pupils enrolled in the school has increased significantly in recent years and projections indicate that this trend will continue. There were 114 pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation. The school has four class teachers. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:

- The quality of school administration and organisational planning is good.
- The principal, teachers and special-needs assistants show great commitment to the welfare of the pupils.
- There is a very good level of participation in continuous professional development by the teachers.
- There is evidence of effective liaison with outside agencies, especially regarding pupils with special educational needs.
- The quality of the school accommodation is very good.

The following main recommendations are made:

- The teachers should implement the existing whole-school plan for the teaching of Irish, with a view to improving standards in all classes.
- The school should ensure that there is greater sharing of good practice between support teachers with regard to planning and record keeping.
- The school should consider using acoustic wall panels or other sound-absorption materials to reduce the amount of reverberation in the school hall.

3. Quality of School Management

- The available evidence indicates that the board of management functions in accordance with relevant legislation and the rules of procedure of the Department of Education and Skills. The board meets regularly and minutes are recorded and maintained in a professional and transparent manner. The board is to be congratulated on the provision of the new school building. It is recommended that the board consider using acoustic wall panels or other sound-absorption materials to reduce the amount of reverberation in the school hall. This would make the hall a less stressful environment for pupils with special educational needs and make it easier to manage pupil behaviour.

- The school principal manages the day-to-day operation of the school as well as teaching a class. She is committed to providing a holistic education for the pupils and takes great pride in the work of the school. Since the principal’s appointment in early 2009, she has dealt effectively with organisational issues arising from the development of the new
school building, increased enrolment and changes to the teaching staff. The acting deputy principal demonstrates commitment and competence in the execution of his assigned duties. The school is reminded of the courses in school leadership that are provided for principals and deputy principals by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

- The management of human resources is good in many respects. There is evidence of good morale on the teaching staff and a good commitment to continuous professional development. Three of the teachers have commenced study for Master’s degrees.

- The management of communications and relations with parents and the wider community is good. The school's parents' association is affiliated to the National Parents Council (Primary). Parents assist with the organisation and management of extra-curricular activities. Copies of school policies and procedures are given to parents on enrolment of their children. There are annual parent-teacher meetings and the school issues a written end-of-year report on each pupil. It is recommended that appropriate information regarding pupil achievement in standardised attainment tests be included in written reports.

- The quality of pupil management varies from very good to fair. Individual teachers were advised in this regard.

4. **Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation**

- The school plan is presented in a professional, reader-friendly format. The quality of organisational policies and procedures is good and these provide useful guidance for staff. It is recommended that the school update its health-and-safety statement and enrolment policy as discussed at the post-evaluation meetings. Whole-school planning for the curricular areas is fair. It is recommended that the principal and staff review these plans with a view to ensuring consistency between teachers and continuity and progression in the pupils' learning as they move from one classroom to the next.

- The principal and staff are to be commended on the work that has commenced on school self-evaluation. Questionnaires have been completed by teachers. The aggregated results of these questionnaires should now form the basis for staff discussion and the identification of relevant school-development targets.

- The overall quality of written preparation and recording by individual class teachers is good.

- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department’s Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. **Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Good practice observed included the use of illustrative materials and classroom displays and very effective use of cross-
curricular themes. More purposeful, engaging lessons could have been taught in some cases if greater consideration had been given to intended learning outcomes and how pupils would be enabled to achieve them.

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English is good. The work done on reading is very good overall. There is effective development of phonological awareness and word-recognition skills and the school also provides good opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure. Results of standardised attainment tests in English reading administered in 2010 show positive patterns of pupil achievement. Pupils learn to write in a range of genres and their work is displayed in classrooms. The quality of the pupils’ handwriting observed in some classes was very good. There is scope to improve oral-language development in some classes by fostering better listening habits among the pupils.

- Significant weaknesses were observed in the teaching and learning of Irish. Although a useful, developmental programme in the speaking of Irish is included in the school plan, it was evident from observation of lessons and from questioning of pupils that this programme was not being implemented. Language games and other activities were used in some classes but there had not been sufficient consideration of the learning targets of these games and although the pupils enjoyed them there was little learning. Overall, the pupils’ proficiency in speaking Irish was weak. It is recommended that the principal and the teachers implement the school plan for Irish and that progress in pupils’ speaking ability be monitored from class to class.

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good. Good use of mathematical equipment and concrete materials was observed in some classes. There were also useful opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups. There was a commendable emphasis on problem solving in the senior classes. Results of standardised attainment tests in Mathematics administered in 2010 show very positive patterns of pupil achievement.

- This school has the potential to make very good provision for Physical Education (PE). Two of the mainstream teachers are studying for Master’s degrees in PE and the new school building has a spacious hall. Some of the PE lessons observed were good. There was evidence that the teachers had given careful consideration to the intended learning targets, pupil activities and the management of pupils and equipment. It is recommended that this practice be implemented in all classes.

- Teachers use a range of assessment approaches. Results of standardised attainment tests in Mathematics and English reading are recorded electronically for each classroom. It is recommended that these be collated on a whole-school basis and analysed with a view to monitoring and evaluating whole-school performance in these areas. A useful template and tutorial for this task is available at www.ppds.ie under the heading DEIS.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The support team comprises a shared learning-support teacher who is based in this school, a learning-support teacher who is based in another school, a part-time resource teacher and two special-needs assistants (SNA). The overall quality of support for pupils is good.

- The three support teachers foster good working relationships with their pupils, provide a suitable learning environment and generally make good use of relevant resources and activities. The individual learning programmes prepared for pupils are generally very good although they could be presented in a more reader-friendly way in some cases. One of the teachers provides very good short-term planning and progress records. The school should ensure that this practice is shared.

- The support teachers, class teachers and SNAs co-operate on useful early-intervention activities. There is good preparation and recording of this work.